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ABSTRACT

These guidelines, which represent a standard of quality exceeding minimum licensing, approval, and accreditation requirements, were prepared for use by most types of public and private early childhood programs. Child care centers, early childhood special education programs, preschools, nursery schools, Head Start programs, kindergartens, and primary units will find them helpful. Guidelines have been grouped into seven major categories: Administration, Staffing, the Learning Environment, Health and Safety, Parent Involvement and Education, Use of Community Resources, and Evaluation of Program and Staff. In each category, a statement of ideals and a rationale are followed by indicators that identify characteristics of quality programs. Also provided is a checklist that administrators, teachers, parents, and others can use to determine the extent to which their program meets the guidelines. It is emphasized that the guidelines are not requirements; they only describe a model of program quality. (RH)

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Indicators Of Quality

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Guiding the Development and Improvement of Early Childhood Education Programs in Nebraska

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Indicators Of Quality

Guiding the Development and Improvement of Early Childhood Education Programs in Nebraska

Prepared by the
Early Childhood Guidelines Task Force
Adopted by the Nebraska State Board of Education
March 1989

Issued by
Approval and Accreditation Section
Division of School Assistance and Support
Nebraska Department of Education
Joe E. Lutjeharms, Commissioner

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FOREWORD

Prior to the development of this document, voluntary state level guidelines designed to promote quality and excellence in early care and education programs for young children were not available. Believing that it could play a role in remedying this, the State Board of Education, in January of 1988, approved the formation of the Early Childhood Guidelines Task Force. The members who served on the Task Force were individuals from throughout the state representing preschool and child care programs, preschool special education, kindergarten/primary education, Head Start, health and human service agencies, parents, post-secondary education, and school administration.

The Task Force spent more than a year conducting research, reviewing guidelines from other sources, and formulating this document. It is intended that these voluntary guidelines will serve as a contribution to the field of early care and education in our state. The Task Force believes they describe a model that will allow new and existing programs to establish goals toward which they can strive to better serve the children and families of Nebraska.

The quality of the group settings we provide for young children makes a difference now and for their future. In the words of an old Chinese proverb—

"A child's life is like a piece of paper
on which every passerby leaves a mark."

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INTRODUCTION

The Purposes of Voluntary Guidelines

In striving to meet increasing needs for early childhood services, communities must also strive to provide high quality settings which will assist children in reaching their potential and better prepare them for the world of tomorrow. Programs offered to children during the early childhood period of birth to eight years should be based on sound, researched principles of child development and staffed by persons optimally prepared to work with children in this age range. Early childhood professionals and others concerned with the welfare of young children believe that voluntary quality guidelines can provide a model for program developers and current operators to use in assuring that program practices are age appropriate, that trained personnel are available, and that facilities are acceptable.

These guidelines were prepared for use by most types of public and private early childhood programs. Child care centers, early childhood special education programs, preschools, nursery schools, Head Start programs, and kindergarten/primary units will all find them helpful. In so far as possible, requirements of minimum licensure have not been repeated, since these guidelines are intended to represent a standard of quality which exceeds the minimums. Although not written to address the special needs of family day care, some portions of the guidelines can be used to assist home providers in professionalizing their operations.

Voluntary guidelines are not requirements. They are intended to augment minimum regulations such as those required in licensing and in the minimum approval and accreditation requirements for public and private schools; they nurture higher quality than minimum standards are able to. It is not anticipated that all programs will be able to meet each and every guideline. With the diversity of programs in Nebraska, it is difficult to specify guidelines that are universally applicable or acceptable; this document represents the best effort of a diverse group of knowledgeable professionals.

Organization of the Guidelines

The guidelines have been grouped into seven major categories: Administration, Staffing, The Learning Environment, Health and Safety, Parent Involvement and Parent Education, Use of Community Resources, and Evaluation of Program and Staff. Each category begins with an Ideal Statement and Rationale, followed by Indicators that identify specify characteristics of quality programs. A checklist is provided to assist administrators, teachers, parents, and others in determining the extent to which their program meets these guidelines. Again, it is important to remember that these guidelines are not requirements; they are intended only to describe a model of program quality toward which programs can aspire to better serve the children and families of Nebraska.

Benefits of Using the Guidelines

Programs which aspire to meet these guidelines can benefit children, their families, their communities, and the programs and staff in the following ways:

Benefits for children:

- allowing children to develop at their own rates of learning
- encouraging social interaction
- providing opportunities for decision making and problem solving
- allowing children to learn by doing and applying knowledge
- respecting and encouraging children's natural interests and abilities
- enhancing a positive disposition for learning

Benefits for families:

- providing comfort and assurance that they are placing their children in a recognized quality program
- fostering positive relationships between parent and child
- serving as a resource for information

Benefits for the community:

- preparing young children to become well adjusted and productive citizens
- offering citizens opportunities to choose identified and recognized quality programs
- promoting interagency collaboration

Benefits to programs and staff:

- providing a point of reference for program structure and quality
- providing staff a process to facilitate an assessment of present programs
- providing criteria for program and personal growth
- providing staff with quality standards to share with parents

ADMINISTRATION

IDEAL STATEMENT: Administration in a quality early childhood program is impartial and consistent and is carried out in accordance with the purposes and/or goals, policies, and procedures established by the governing body of the program.

RATIONALE: The success of an early childhood program is dependent upon the leadership of the administration in meeting the needs of the children, parents, and staff. An effective administrator places high priority on the promotion of developmentally appropriate practices, optimum utilization of human and material resources, sound fiscal planning and budgeting, and collaboration between staff, parents, and community as partners in the education and development of children.

QUALITY INDICATORS

	COMPLIANCE STATUS		
	Met	Not Met	In Process
1. The program meets all applicable state and local standards.			
2. The program is based on a written statement of purposes and/or goals which reflects sound principles of child development, and the statement is shared with all staff and the parents/guardians of children enrolled.			
3. The program has written policies and procedures of operation based on the statement of purposes and/or goals, which include but are not limited to:			
a. fee schedule (where applicable)			
b. hours of operation			
c. holidays/closings			
d. procedures for dealing with illness			
e. emergency procedures			
f. copies of all forms used			
g. discipline guidelines			
4. The program has written policies and procedures for personnel based on its statement of purposes and/or goals which include but are not limited to:			
a. job descriptions			
b. employment practices			
c. salary schedules			
d. description of benefits			
e. provisions for vacation, illness/personal leave			
f. grievance procedures			
g. resignation/termination procedures			
h. procedures for supervision and evaluation of personnel			
i. staff development requirements			
j. provision for orientation of new staff members			

	Met	Not Met	In Process
5. The program has liability insurance coverage for children.			
6. A parent handbook is provided for the parent/guardian of every child. The handbook is updated annually.			
7. Fiscal records are maintained.			
8. Budgeting practices demonstrate long-range as well as short-term planning.			
9. Time is allocated within the hours of operation for shared planning by the staff.			
10. The program staff meets at least monthly.			
11. The program administrator assumes responsibility for supervision of all components of the program (e.g., staff development, staff and program evaluation, parent involvement/parent education, community resource utilization, staff selection and deployment, program development and oversight).			

STAFFING

IDEAL STATEMENT: A quality early childhood program employs and deploys staff members optimally qualified to assist children in advancing all aspects of their development—social, emotional, intellectual, and physical. Further, the program assures the development of the staff through the provision of individual and program wide in-service.

RATIONALE: One of the most important factors affecting the quality of an early childhood program is the quality of the staff. Personal characteristics, philosophical beliefs, understanding and knowledge of child development, and the ability to apply these in interactions with children are critical considerations in the selection of those who care for and teach young children.

The quality of the relationships between teachers and children has a significant influence on a child's learning experience. The attachment formed between a child and the teacher has an impact upon the child's sense of security, ability to explore and be curious, ability to reach out to others, and other aspects of positive development. Therefore, it is critical that the procedures for staff selection include consideration of applicants' personal characteristics as well as appropriate educational preparation and related experience.

The quality program provides for the professional development of all staff, encourages their participation in related professional organizations, and works to promote their ongoing employment in the program. All staff have a continuing need to update their skills. Early childhood programs and their staff differ in many ways, and methods of improvement will differ from program to program. A strong link exists between staff development and staff and program evaluation. An analysis of a program's strengths and weaknesses provides a basis for improving the quality of the staff.

Quality programs are organized to meet the learning and care needs of children. Lower staff/child ratios and optimum group size have been shown to promote positive outcomes for young children in both the cognitive and interpersonal domains. The size of groups and the number and types of staff assigned are dependent upon the ages of the children and factors such as the arrangement of the physical setting. Programs which integrate special needs children may require lower staff/child ratios.

QUALITY INDICATORS

SELECTION OF STAFF

Met	Not Met	In Process

1. There is a written procedure for the selection of staff which is related to the philosophy of the program.

QUALIFICATIONS OF STAFF

Met	Not Met	In Process

1. Each staff member has appropriate training based upon the level of responsibility.

   a. If the early childhood program employs an administrator, that person has the following qualifications:

      (1) In public or nonpublic schools the building administrator has at least 6 semester credit hours in child development/early childhood education.

      (2) In a child care center or preschool the director has at least:

         (a) a bachelor level degree from an accredited college or university, or its equivalent, and at least 6 semester credit hours in child development/early childhood education; OR

         (b) an associate level degree in child development/early childhood education and 3 years experience in early childhood education.

   b. If the early childhood program is a part of a public school, the teacher holds a valid Nebraska Teaching Certificate endorsed as follows:

      (1) If a program for children younger than kindergarten age, an endorsement in Early Childhood Education;

      (2) If a program serving preschool handicapped children, an endorsement in Preschool Special Education;

      (3) If a kindergarten, at least an endorsement in Elementary Education and 12 semester credit hours in child development/early childhood education;

      (4) If a primary grade, at least an endorsement in Elementary Education and 6 semester credit hours in child development/early childhood education.

Met	Not Met	In Process

c. In a child care center or preschool, the head teacher responsible for supervising other staff has at least (also applies in a program operated by one person):

(1) A bachelor level degree in early child development/early childhood education; OR

(2) A bachelor level degree in a related field, with at least one of the following: 12 semester credit hours in child development/early childhood education; Montessori Certification; a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential; OR

(3) An associate level degree in child development/ early childhood education and 1 year's experience in early childhood education.

d. In a child care center or preschool, a teacher responsible for a group of children has at least:

(1) A bachelor level degree in child development/ early childhood education; OR

(2) A bachelor level degree in elementary education with additional training and experience in early childhood education; OR

(3) An associate level degree in child development/ early childhood education; OR

(4) A Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential; OR

(5) Montessori Certification; OR

(6) Nebraska Child Care Workers Association Certification (Level 5).

e. In all programs serving young children, a teacher assistant has at least a high school diploma or GED and experience working with young children.

Met	Not Met	In Process

f. Staff with no prior experience in programs enrolling children with handicapping conditions agree, through a written plan developed at the time of employment, to obtain in-service on working with young children with special needs.

g. Staff with no prior experience in programs enrolling infants/toddlers agree, through a written plan developed at the time of employment, to obtain in-service specific to working with children in this age range.

h. Staff with no prior experience in programs which focus primarily on working with parents agree, through a written plan developed at the time of employment, to obtain in-service specific to parent education and effective techniques for working with adults.

i. Staff who regularly prepare meals have appropriate certification from the State Department of Health.

STAFF RETENTION

1. The program has a written plan to encourage staff to remain with the program.

2. The program has a written plan for the upgrading of salaries which demonstrates an effort to improve salary equity among early childhood professionals.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

1. The program has a written policy stating a commitment to a staff development program.

2. A committee representative of the staff is selected to plan and assist in implementing the staff development program.

3. The staff development committee conducts an annual needs assessment.

	Met	Not Met	In Process
4. A variety of formats is employed in the staff development program (e.g., on-site training, visitations to other programs, conferences, encouragement of membership in and attendance at meetings of early childhood professional organizations, curriculum development projects).			
5. When possible, locally arranged in-service is shared with other programs and agencies.			
6. The program maintains and utilizes a professional library for the staff.			
7. The program subscribes to and utilizes at least one professional journal in the field of early childhood education.			
8. Individual staff files contain documentation of participation in staff development activities.			

STAFF DEPLOYMENT

1. The program maintains a sufficient staff/child ratio and limits total group size. The ratio is determined by the number and ages of the children and the nature of the physical setting of the program. When age groups are mixed, the lower ratio prevails.

Age Range of Children	Number of Staff	Number of Children
6 weeks to 18 months	1	4
18 months to 3 years	1	6
3 years	1	10
4 years and 5 years	1	12
Kindergarten through second grade in schools approved by the Department of Education (does not apply in school age child care programs licensed by the Department of Social Services)	1	18; OR 19-25 with a full time para-professional

IDEAL STATEMENT: The quality early childhood program provides a learning environment which facilitates the optimal growth and development of children, with opportunities for appropriate learning experiences through active involvement with people and materials.

RATIONALE: Guided by shared goals, curriculum in early childhood includes everything that happens in the program—the nature of the daily schedule, children's interactions with materials and people, the planned activities and transitions between them, and the routines of each day. The quality and arrangement of the physical space, equipment, and materials have a strong influence on the types of activities and interactions which are possible, as well as on the feelings of both children and staff. Since young children learn by being active, a quality child-oriented program utilizes both planned and spontaneous activities to help children discover more about themselves and the world in which they live.

Within the physical environment, quality interactions between the staff and the children and the promotion of harmonious relationships among the children are viewed as essential to achieving the program's goals. The enhancement of self-esteem in children is accomplished through the provision of optimally challenging learning opportunities. A quality early childhood program recognizes that children learn to view themselves as industrious and competent when they are respected for their unique characteristics and have developmentally appropriate experiences available to them.

QUALITY INDICATORS

THE PHYSICAL SETTING

	COMPLIANCE STATUS		
	Met	Not Met	In Process
1. The usable indoor activity space provides at least 35 square feet per child.			
2. The space is arranged to provide optimum separation of quiet and noisy areas, but permits a clear view of divided areas for supervision by adults.			
3. There are clearly defined age appropriate activity areas for various types of learning experiences.			

Indoors, these areas may include but are not limited to:

Blocks	Math
Science/discovery	Manipulative/table toys
Music	Cooking
Art	Dramatic play
Language/books/listening/writing	
Water/sensory play	

Met	Not Met	In Process

Outdoors, these areas may include but are not limited to:

Water/sensory play	Sand
Ball games	Woodworking
Wheel toys	Science/nature
Climbers	Swings
Art	Dramatic play

4. The space and its furnishing are arranged to facilitate a variety of large group, small group, and individual activities.

5. Soft elements are included in the environment (e.g., cushions, rugs, rocking chairs, carpeting indoors; sand, grass, etc. outdoors).

6. Sound-absorbing materials are used to reduce excessive noise in the indoor environment (e.g., rugs under blocks, pads under pounding bench, acoustical materials on walls and ceilings, etc.).

7. The surfaces under indoor and outdoor equipment from which children might fall are resilient (e.g., sand, pea gravel, dirt, grass, rubber matting).

8. The indoor environment is attractive and colorful, with children's work and other materials displayed at a child's eye level.

9. The indoor and outdoor environments are clean, safe, and free from clutter.

10. The space and materials are arranged to encourage children to make independent choices.

11. A variety of age appropriate equipment and materials is provided to fit the range of age, interests, and abilities among the children, including those children with handicapping conditions.

12. Furniture is of the appropriate size, type, and durability to fit the age and developmental levels/needs of the individuals who are to use it.

	Met	Not Met	In Process
13. Equipment and furnishings are refurbished or replaced as needed to add to the overall appearance of the environment.			
14. Individual spaces are provided for children's clothing and other personal belongings (e.g., bins, baskets, labeled hooks).			
15. Adequate storage is available for materials and equipment.			
16. Equipment provided outdoors can be and is used without adult assistance, but with supervision.			
17. The outdoor environment provides a variety of surfaces.			
18. The outdoor environment is made attractive and inviting by capitalizing upon such natural features as trees, grass, and other plants.			
19. The bathrooms and drinking water are easily accessible to children and adults from both indoor and outdoor work/play areas.			
20. Toilet training chairs are located away from play areas and are arranged to provide for privacy.			
21. Bathroom fixtures are of appropriate size, or stepstools are provided, so that self-help is encouraged.			
22. When the program includes napping and/or sleeping, cots and/or mats are arranged in the same location each day.			
23. Staff is provided with private and secure areas for their personal belongings.			
THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES			
1. The curriculum is child-centered, in that the individual needs and interests of children are considered when program goals are set.			
2. The program's written curriculum is available for review. It reflects the philosophy of the program and its goals for children.			

	Met	Not Met	In Process
3. The posted daily schedule provides a balance of activities on such dimensions as: a. indoor/outdoor b. quiet/active c. individual/small group/large group d. large muscle/small muscle e. child initiated/teacher initiated			
4. A variety of developmentally appropriate, concrete, experiential learning activities are provided to: a. promote a positive self-concept in each child. b. develop social skills in each child. c. encourage the child to think, reason, question, and experiment. d. foster both receptive and expressive language development. e. enhance each child's physical development and skills. f. encourage sound safety, health, and nutritional practices. g. stimulate the child in creative expression and appreciation of the arts.			
5. The available activities provide opportunities for learning through exploration, guided discovery, problem solving, repetition, intuition, imitation, etc.			
6. Opportunities are provided for children to learn through a variety of sensory as well as verbal experiences.			
7. Transitions offer opportunities for learning and seldom require that all children move as a group from one activity to another.			
8. Time during the day is divided between child selected and teacher directed activities. Staff respect the child's right to choose not to participate in all activities.			
9. Self-help skills are taught and incorporated into the daily schedule.			
10. The daily routine is flexible enough to adapt to the individual needs and interests of the child.			

	Met	Not Met	In Process
11. The staff is flexible in changing the schedule when adverse weather or other situations arise. Such changes in plans are carried out without alarming the children.			
12. Routine tasks are treated as opportunities to further children's learning (e.g., lunch or snack time is a period for encouraging language development, social interaction, appreciation of culturally relevant foods, self-help skills, nutrition education).			
13. A wide variety of child-sized, age appropriate, safe, durable learning materials and equipment is available.			
a. For infants, materials and equipment might include but are not limited to: -toys that rattle, squeak, or make music -cuddly toys, teething toys, mobiles, unbreakable objects and pictures -infant seats, crawling area, furniture to pull self up			
b. For toddlers, materials and equipment might include but are not limited to: -push and pull toys-stacking toys; large wooden spools/beads/cubes -durable picture books; music -pounding bench; simple puzzles -play telephone; dolls; pretend toys -large paper, crayons -furniture to hold onto while walking -sand and water toys			
c. For preschool and kindergarten/primary children, materials and equipment might include but are not limited to: -active play equipment for climbing and balancing -sand and water toys -wheel toys -balls -parachutes -unit blocks and accessories -manipulatives (puzzles, beads, pegs, games, design blocks, small building toys, etc.) -woodworking tools and materials -basic art materials (painting equipment and paper, collage materials, paste, glue, scissors, crayons, clay, dough, etc.)			

Met	Not Met	In Process

-science materials to increase observation and communication skills as well as provide opportunities for children to learn by exploring, discovering, and experimenting
-dramatic play accessories and props (e.g., dolls, dress-up clothes, child-sized furniture, etc.)
-cooking equipment
-basic math materials and games to help children discover concepts by exploration and experimentation and problem solving (e.g., objects for sorting, geoboards, Cuisenaire rods)
-whole language materials (e.g., picture and predictable books, records, games, classification lotto, flannel boards and materials, puppets, writing materials, age appropriate reading materials, etc.)
-materials for music and creative movement (e.g., instruments, records, record player, tape recorder, dance props, etc.)

14. Learning materials are available in sufficient quantity so that:

    a. They can be periodically changed to provide variety; and,

    b. Each child present can at any given time be individually involved.

15. Materials are arranged in an accessible manner to provide a clear view of what is available, promote self-selection, and encourage free exploration.

16. Opportunities to learn through play are an integral part of the daily curriculum.

17. Materials and equipment permit varied types of play/ interaction.

    a. More than one of each toy is available to promote parallel play (e.g., two or more phones, two or more dolls, two or more trucks, etc.).

    b. Related materials are available to promote cooperative interactions (e.g., one or more grocery carts, purses, copies of the same book, etc.).

Met	Not Met	In Process

c. Unstructured materials (e.g., blocks, sand, water, finger paint, clay, etc.) are available to promote symbolic play.

d. Games in various formats (e.g., card, lotto, board, etc.) are available to acquaint children with the function of rules.

18. Equipment and materials are available to promote both gross and fine motor development.

19. Children are given opportunities throughout the day for indoor and outdoor play.

20. Learning activities, materials, and equipment have been chosen to reflect and respect the diversity of races, national origins, genders, abilities, and ages in the larger society.

21. The curriculum allows for and encourages involvement by parents and other members of the community as resource persons, assistants, etc.

22. Field trips near and away from the program site are utilized when possible to broaden the children's base of experience and knowledge.

23. Children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development are monitored through the daily use of observation. Any formal assessment used to monitor children's progress is age appropriate and meets accepted standards of reliability and validity.

THE INTERPERSONAL ENVIRONMENT

1. The program is characterized by an overall climate of acceptance, caring, and trust.

2. Groups are organized so that each child relates to the same teacher for a majority of the day. Every effort is made to assure that secure, dependable relationships between children and teachers are established and maintained.

Met	Not Met	In Process

3. The staff displays attitudes and promotes activities which positively reflect the diverse nature of American society with respect to race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, and physical and mental abilities.

4. At most times natural conversations among children and between children and staff characterize the auditory environment. Times when the teacher talks to the whole group are limited. Verbal interaction and discussion are encouraged.

5. The staff models positive and culturally sensitive communication techniques (e.g., speaking at eye level, observing optimum proximity, using low and friendly voice tones).

6. Expectations for children's behavior are appropriate to their current level of development.

7. The staff addresses children in a direct, respectful manner, avoiding unfavorable comparisons, undertones of sarcasm, or intent to humiliate.

8. Traits of independence, self-initiation, and responsibility are encouraged in developmentally relevant ways, both through the organization of the physical environment and the routines established by the staff.

9. The staff models and maintains age-appropriate expectations for children with regard to the development of positive traits of character (e.g., kindness, trust, honesty, non-violence, fairness, willingness to share, cooperation).

10. The staff models problem solving techniques in addressing classroom issues and encourages similar approaches by children in coping with their own problems.

11. Adults comment on positive behavior and accomplishments by specific rather than generalized responses (e.g., "Your house has a window in every wall!" rather than, "Nice house.")

12. A child's periodic need to be away from the group is respected.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

IDEAL STATEMENT: The quality early childhood program establishes and maintains a safe and healthful environment for children, staff, and parents. Health and safety factors exceed the minimum standards of other regulating agencies.

RATIONALE: These quality indicators are intended to augment minimum standards currently applied to such programs by the Nebraska Departments of Social Services, Education, and Health, and the Fire Marshal's Office. In quality programs it is anticipated that efforts are made to assure that the setting and the practices of the staff foster optimum health and safety practices in all areas, including the prevention of illness and accidents, coping with emergencies, and the encouragement of positive practices.

QUALITY INDICATORS

	COMPLIANCE STATUS		
	Met	Not Met	In Process
1. All applicable minimum health and safety regulations are met on a continuing basis.			
2. Upon enrollment, parents/guardians are required to provide evidence that each child has had a health evaluation conducted by a licensed physician within the program year. Parents/guardians may request an exemption based on medical/religious beliefs. (Programs which provide physical examinations within the fall of the program year to the children enrolled are exempt from this guideline.)			
3. The program has a written policy, developed in consultation with a health professional, which delineates the conditions under which children are excluded from the program (e.g., communicable diseases, communicable skin diseases, fevers).			
4. A person qualified in child CPR and first aid is immediately available at the program site and on field trips.			
5. A qualified nurse has been identified and is available to the program to provide consultation on health related issues.			
6. When using vehicles other than regulation school buses, approved car seats are used when transporting children who are younger than four or weigh less than 40 pounds.			
7. Vehicles used to transport children are inspected upon acquisition, are optimally maintained, and are insured.			

Met	Not Met	In Process

8. The program has a written procedure for monitoring admittance of visitors to the program site other than staff or legal guardians.

9. The program has a written policy concerning the release of children which requires parents/guardians to provide a list of persons authorized to take any child from the program site. The policy includes a requirement that designated persons must provide identification before leaving the program site with the child. The policy should include a written plan of action in case an unauthorized person attempts to take the child from the site.

10. Emergency fire and tornado drills are conducted once a month and records of same are kept on file.

11. In the absence of the 911 emergency system in a community, a vehicle is immediately available for use by staff.

12. Staff accompanying children on field trips carry written emergency procedures.

13. The promotion of positive health and safety practices is a part of the curriculum of the program.

14. There is a plan for promoting wellness among the staff and parents.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND PARENT EDUCATION

IDEAL STATEMENT: The quality early childhood program recognizes the value of parent involvement through the promotion of positive interaction with parents and the provision of a parent support and education program.

RATIONALE: The most important influences on children are their families and their home environments. Therefore, parent involvement is an integral part of the quality early childhood program. Parental involvement improves the program for the child, benefits the staff and center, and improves parenting skills. Today's families are very diversified. Each family has primary responsibility for its own children. The parent involvement/parent education program must be based on an acceptance of diversity among families, including an awareness of differing values, structures, needs, and aspirations. Quality programs recognize that parenting is a developmental process in which they may assist through the provision of support and information.

QUALITY INDICATORS

	COMPLIANCE STATUS		
	Met	Not Met	In Process
1. A comprehensive handbook is provided to each family which includes information about the program philosophy, policies, and procedures.			
2. Each parent is provided an orientation to the program.			
3. Home visits are made, as appropriate.			
4. Communications are provided to parents on a regular basis through newsletters, parent-information boards, individual contact, and parent conferences.			
5. The program provides regular avenues for parental input (e.g., parent advisory committees, orientation sessions, coffees, needs assessments).			
6. Parents are encouraged to visit the program, to volunteer in the program, and to make suggestions.			
7. A staff member is accessible to parents throughout the hours of operation.			
8. Parent education programs are provided to all parents based on a parent needs assessment.			
9. The program provides resources to parents whose children are in transition to another program.			

USE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

IDEAL STATEMENT: A quality early childhood program integrates community resources to enhance the program.

RATIONALE: Children served in early childhood programs present diverse backgrounds and developmental levels; therefore, a diversity of needs must be addressed by the program. Community resources expand needed services for children and their families. The utilization of these resources strengthens parental and community support for early childhood programs.

QUALITY INDICATORS

1. Community resources not available within the program are arranged on a consultative basis (e.g., programs provided by community agencies, services of health professionals, psychological services).

2. Procedures for utilization of professionals beyond the program are defined and include verification of need and assurance of confidentiality.

3. A listing of available community resources is provided to the staff (e.g., mental health clinics, state agencies, service clubs, and volunteer agencies).

4. The staff shares information with parents regarding the availability of relevant community resources.

5. Volunteers from the community participate in the program.

6. Orientation, training, and a handbook are available to volunteers who participate on a regular basis.

COMPLIANCE STATUS		
Met	Not Met	In Process

EVALUATION OF PROGRAM AND STAFF

IDEAL STATEMENT: A quality early childhood program conducts regular and systematic evaluation of the program and staff to assure that the philosophy and goals of the program are being fulfilled.

RATIONALE: Regular and systematic evaluation is an important aspect of a quality early childhood program. It is essential that evaluation be done on a regular basis to maintain the vitality of the program and to assure that it is being conducted in the best interests of the children and families being served. Evaluation that includes informal and formal activities provides a mechanism for feedback through suggestions that will enhance both the competency of the staff and the effectiveness of the program. Evaluation that combines self-study and outside appraisal is more comprehensive and meaningful when relevant individuals are involved, contributing to awareness of strengths and weaknesses.

QUALITY INDICATORS

	COMPLIANCE STATUS		
	Met	Not Met	In Process
PROGRAM EVALUATION			
1. Annual review of the program is completed by a team which represents administration, parents, and staff.			
2. The annual program review results in written goals and activities which foster program improvement. These goals and activities are addressed in a staff meeting following the program review.			
3. A formal evaluation of all components of the program is conducted at least every three years.			
4. A written report of the formal evaluation includes strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations and is provided to parents and staff for their review.			
STAFF EVALUATION			
1. The program administrator conducts at least an annual formal evaluation of each staff member who works directly with children, provides written and oral comments and suggestions to the staff member, and maintains a report of the evaluation in the personnel file.			

Met	Not Met	In Process

2. Each staff member is informed of the procedures and standardized forms for written evaluation that include but are not limited to the following:

   a. knowledge of principles of child development
   b. communication skills with children, staff, and parents
   c. evidence of professional improvement
   d. planning, preparation, and use of appropriate techniques and materials
   e. use of good judgement
   f. adequate record keeping
   g. employment of sound ethical practices

3. Staff members are informed of areas for improvement through identification of specific goals, including a time line for improvement; there is a regular review of progress toward improvement.

4. A probationary period, including a formal evaluation, is specified for new employees.

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